

# *Celebrating 25 Years* *of the* **Conservation Reserve Program**

## CRP — On the Ground

### CREP Project

Saves Streams  
Walla Walla Co.



### Grass Filter Strip

Protects Peone  
Creek,  
Spokane Co.



### CRP Creates

Wildlife Park  
Spokane Co.



CRP Provides  
Farm Balance  
Whitman Co.



### CREP Preserves

Family Lifestyle in  
Whatcom Co.



### Business Grows

with CRP in  
Whitman Co.



*Whitman County Contour Buffer Strip—Photo by Patrick Lewis*

## CRP Provides Balance on the Farm

It's all about balance.

“We have been trying to balance conservation, the economics of our farm, and its sustainability, and CRP [the Conservation Reserve Program] has been a great success,” said Steve Henning, president of the Henning Farms Joint Venture in Thornton, WA.

Administered by the Farm Service Agency, CRP is a voluntary program encouraging agricultural landowners to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. Landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland.

The Hennings first enrolled ground in the 2003 CRP signup. They've added additional areas since then. Steve is the fifth generation of the family to crop land first broken out in the Thornton area in 1888. The CRP acres encompass hilltops and steep inclines in contoured buffer strips.

“We'd been fighting erosion for years, and this program was a perfect fit for us,”

Henning said, who estimates that contoured buffer strips and low-till practices have dramatically reduced erosion on their land.

Wildlife has also sprung back into the area. The resurgence has made the farm a popular hunting stop for friends of the family. Steve joked that deer going through the area gave the buffers their freshly mowed look.

The program's flexibility is part of its value. Working directly with a soil conservationist at the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Hennings were able to choose a seed mix tailored to their ground, and put in practices that made the most sense for their situation.

"We were very lucky that our covers [vegetation] sprang right up, we haven't had too much trouble maintaining them," Wayne, Steve's father, said.

The family's success with the program has caught on with their neighbors, and CRP tracts have been popping up throughout the area.

"NRCS and FSA have been great to work with, and helped us design a system that worked," Steve said. "We've seen benefits across the board, and definitely want to continue working with the program in the future."